USDA Foreign Agricultural Service
GAIN Report
Global Agriculture Information Network
Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 7/5/2006

GAIN Report Number: PL6044

Poland

Agricultural Situation

Scientists Discuss Rapeseed Prospects in Poland 2006

Approved by:
Ed Porter, Agricultural Counselor
U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:
WFM/EP

Report Highlights:
Rapeseed production in Poland may increase in response to new, expected legislation on bio-fuels. However, the scale of expansion will likely be rather limited. Current concerns about biotechnology may limit chances that it will help with rapeseed production in the near future.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Warsaw [PL1]
[PL]

On the June 12 and 13, an AgOffice representative had a chance to participate in the XVIII Annual Scientists' Conference on Oilseed Crops held in Poznan. The Conference was organized by the Oilseeds Department of Institute of Plant Breeding (http://www.ihar.poznan.pl/). Well over 100 scientists, farmers and oilseed industry representatives attended the conference. The conference was guided by Professor Iwona Bartkowiak-Broda, head of Department of Genetics and Breeding of Oilseed Crops at the Institute of Plant Breeding. The Conference was very well organized and well appreciated by participants.

Two major subjects that were discussed were bio-diesel raw material production and the possibilities of using biotech for such production. Other topics discussed were new studies and results on agrobacterium mediated transformation of microspore-derived embryos; the relationship of yielding ability and heterosis effect on winter rapeseed F_1 hybrids; use of DNA markers; mechanical properties of rapeseed deposit; rapeseed agronomy (time and plant density); pest threats to oilseed rape; insecticide resistance of oilseed rape pests; technological properties of confectionery sunflower; and bio-stimulant use in winter rapeseed.

Discussions about bio-diesel and new draft legislation for its use created significant interest among rapeseed producers and scientists because it will offer an alternative to growing sugar beets and grains, both of which face production restrictions. Although the basic legislation on bio-fuels is still not ready, both the industry and farmers are very interested in raw material production to produce bio-esters, which means rapeseed, as this is the only crop for such production that could be grown on a large scale in Poland.

The possibilities of bio-raw material production was presented by Ms. Ewa Rosiak from the Institute of Agricultural Economics and Mr. Tadeusz Walkowski from the Institute of Plant Breeding at Poznan. According to these presenters, MY 2006/07 rapeseed production in Poland is currently estimated at 1.3 MMT, which is 0.2 MMT less than last year. Out of this amount, around 0.9 MMT will be needed to cover local demand for rapeseed oil by the food industry. The remainder will be crushed for methyl-ester production to be used locally or exported.

Demand for methyl-esters production could significantly increase demand for local rapeseed and increase rapeseed crushing. Methyl-ester production has just started in Poland and almost 64,000 MT of methyl-esters were produced in 2005. Majority of these esters were exported to Germany, where legislation allows for benefits from such use.

Under an EU directive from 2003, the Commission recommends that bio-fuel use reach 5.75% by 2010 in each member state. To reach this level, Poland will need to expand its rapeseed production to nearly 2.5 MMT, to be able to crush about 1.4 MMT rapeseed in order to produce 570,000 MT of methyl-esters. This would require almost double the current rapeseed acreage. It is likely that within the next 3 years, rapeseed planting will increase by 300,000 hectares to 800,000 hectares.

According to the presenters, this increased level of production is possible, however, certain limitations and concerns for further expansion were discussed. Primarily because of some technical requirements and problems related to plant protection, rapeseed is considered a crop that can only be grown on large farms. Poland mostly has small farms and large sale production is limited. Rapeseed requires good soils, and large areas of soils in Poland are too sandy for rapeseed production. Also, rapeseed requires a lengthy crop rotation (at least a 4-year cycle) and is sensitive to winterkill. All these factors suggest rather limited possibilities for significant expansion in Poland. Still, there are possibilities to intensify production and increased yields using new technology and varieties.

Ms. Iwona Wisniewska from the Institute of Plant Breeding presented the following topic, "Genetic Modifications of Rapeseed – Current Status and Perspectives". The author reviewed current biotech legislation in Poland and its relation to current EU legislation. The author stressed that biotechnology opens significant possibilities for better farming. Ms. Wisniewska appeared very well informed on world biotech crop production and concentrated on developments in biotech rapeseed. She also discussed existing concerns surrounding possible biotech rapeseed production in Poland. These concerns included a lack of legislation supporting biotech cultivation and environmental concerns such as involuntary cross-pollination in Poland.

During her discussion, it was pointed that because of the large number of different insects that attack rapeseed, it will be challenging to create a GMO variety that is resistant to multi-insects. Some conference participants offered a very negative position on biotech cultivation. It was agreed that there are many issues to resolve before biotech rapeseed will be permitted in Poland. But, it was also agreed that biotechnology could be the solution to certain challenges facing Polish agriculture.